



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
**MODERN LETTERS**

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

**Newsletter – 4 April 2006**

This is the 84th in a series of occasional newsletters from the Victoria University centre of the International Institute of Modern Letters. For more information about any of the items, please email [modernletters@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz).

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**1. Best New Zealand Poems 05**

Paris-based poet Andrew Johnston has edited the fifth edition of *Best New Zealand Poems*, which is now launched online at [www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/bnzp](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/bnzp).

*Best New Zealand Poems 2005* appears with support from Creative New Zealand, and features poets including Michele Amas, James Brown, Jenny Bornholdt, Anne Kennedy, Brian Turner, and Ian Wedde. Rugby and cycling, saris and sausage rolls, racial stereotypes and soulless bureaucracies are just some of the topics tackled by the selected poets. Johnston's editorial remarks, "What's refreshing about poetry from New Zealand is that there is a high degree of local acceptance about opening oneself up to the notion that there are many types of poetry. New Zealand is particularly good at nurturing the kind of variety that lets very good poems thrive." Andrew Johnston edited the Books pages of *The Evening Post* during the 1990s, and now works as an editor for the *International Herald Tribune*, as well as producing poetry weblog *The Page* ([www.thepage.name](http://www.thepage.name)). See Recent Web Reading (below) for a link to one of his poems.

## **2. The good oil**

Some of us were vaguely alarmed by the following moment in Steve Braunias's Sunday Star-Times profile of 2006 Prize in Modern Letters winner Carl Shuker:

'[Carl Shuker] said, "My best night of drinking was when I had seven jugs of beer and a bottle of cooking oil." '

This seemed to be taking suffering in the course of art to dangerous as well as banal levels. We are glad to report that the novelist has assured us that the journalist misheard. The cooking oil was in fact a bottle of cooking wine.

## **3. Te Mata Estate Literary Festival 2006**

Te Mata Estate, in association with the International Institute of Modern Letters, is gathering together its Poets Laureate for a night of fine words in the newly refurbished Hawke's Bay Opera House, in Hastings. Taking part in the night will be Bill Manhire, Elizabeth Smither, Brian Turner and Jenny Bornholdt. The fifth Poet Laureate, Hone Tuwhare, is unable to make the evening, but good friend Glenn Colquhoun, who was awarded the Prize in Modern Letters in 2004, will be reading Hone's poetry on his behalf. These established poets will be joined on the night by young Hawke's Bay poet, Russell Kale, who was a 2005 finalist in the Bell Gully National Schools Poetry Award. The event will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2006. Tickets (\$30, including a glass of Te Mata wine and finger food) are available from Creative Hastings, phone 06 878 9447 or E-mail [artcentre@clear.net.nz](mailto:artcentre@clear.net.nz) or from the festival director at [kthorsen@clear.net.nz](mailto:kthorsen@clear.net.nz) .

## **4. The expanding bookshelf (1)**

With his new book James Brown joins Brian Turner in the ranks of New Zealand cycling poets. *The Year of the Bicycle* was written during Brown's 2004 stint as Victoria University-Creative New Zealand Writer in Residence, when he rode his mountain bike to the IIML each day, and in the weekends took to the hills. The book was wheeled out last month, and has already had the thumbs up from LeafSalon's reviewer, who wrote that 'Brown's fourth collection of poems keeps up his superlative standard.'

## **5. Tinned trout**

New Zealand online journal Trout has just released a joint issue with the Hawai'i-based Tinfish, a journal of experimental poetry from the Pacific, including Hawai'i, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Australia, California, and western Canada. The resulting mix can be found at

<http://www.trout.auckland.ac.nz/journal/13/>

## 6. Stones in your ears

Mark Young, the poet whose work was rediscovered by the editors of the *Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1960-1975* anthology, is to put out an e-zine called *Otoliths*. An otolith, according to Young, is 'one of the small bones or particles of calcareous or other hard substance in the internal ear of vertebrates, and in the auditory organs of many invertebrates; an ear stone.' *Otoliths* is open to submissions of textual poetry, 'vispo', fiction and essays (up to 5000 words), photographs, art & any combination of the above. Kinetic or moving pieces are also welcome provided they are pre-coded & can be temporarily demonstrated somewhere. While there will be no payment, the editor writes, 'my intention is to also bring each issue out in a print on demand form, & each contributor will receive a complimentary copy.' Submissions may be sent to [otolitheditor@gmail.com](mailto:otolitheditor@gmail.com) as attachments or in the body of the email, and should be accompanied by a brief biographical note (photo optional). Submission deadline for the first issue is 30 April.

## 7. Icetongue and Gecko

It seems there's an online journal for everyone these days. Those with a literary interest in Antarctica now have their own outlet. Icetongue ([www.icetongue.org](http://www.icetongue.org)) was founded by a group of participants in the US Antarctic programme. They're interested in literary work in English from anyone who has a connection to Antarctica. They admit to an 'unabashed bias for writers who have travelled below the Antarctic Circle', but will consider any poems or works of fiction that have an evident Antarctic theme.

For those whose interest in Antarctica extends beyond the purely literary, Victoria University's student environmental group Gecko is holding a concert to celebrate the conservation of the continent and encourage its future preservation. Funds raised will be donated to ECO (the Environment and Conservation Organisation of New Zealand). Eco is a member of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and has engaged in major campaigns to protect Antarctica and the Southern Ocean marine environment. The concert takes place on 29 April at Happy, cnr Tory & Vivian St.

## 8. Brilliant Fassah

Positive reviews have been flowing in for *The Brilliant Fassah*, co-created by actors Tim Spite and James Ashcroft with 2001 MA graduate Gabe McDonnell (The SeeYd Company). John Smythe, writing in the *National Business Review*, describes the play as 'Richly textured and fluidly rendered... For ninety minutes *The Brilliant Fassah* delivers delight.' Lynn Freeman (*Capital Times*) was equally impressed: '*The Brilliant Fassah* is by far the funniest of the company's growing repertoire... Tim Spite is in his element... James Ashcroft covers an impressive spectrum of weird and wonderful characters with ease and style and Amy Tarleton is as memorable as ever as Nathan's wife who seeks something more. Mention must be made of Sven Mezhoud's quite

brilliant set.' *The Brilliant Fassah* runs until 15 April at Circa Studio. Tickets \$35, Students \$28, Under 25's \$20. Bookings tel 801 7992, or online at [www.circa.co.nz](http://www.circa.co.nz).

## 9. The expanding bookshelf (2)

Another new book of poetry from Victoria University Press hits the shelves this month. A posthumous collection from the late artist and poet Joanna Margaret Paul, edited by her friend (and Victoria University's current Writer in Residence) Bernadette Hall, will be launched this weekend. *Like Love Poems* offers a great deal of previously unpublished work selected from Joanna Paul's notebooks and papers. As the blurb says, it 'gives readers access to the full scale of her achievement as a poet for the first time'. It also makes a fine companion volume to *Joanna Paul: Drawings*, a catalogue due next month from Auckland University Press /Mahara Gallery to accompany 'Subject to hand', a touring exhibition currently showing at Mahara Gallery, Waikanae (until 14 May).

## 10. From the whiteboard

Because rhythm has direct access to the unconscious, because it can hypnotise us, enter our bodies and make us move, it is a power. And power is political. That is why rhythm is always revolutionary ground. (Robert Hass)

## 11. Recent web reading

Bush's War (the Hass poem):

<http://www.aprweb.org/issues/current/hass.html>

New poem by Andrew Johnston

<http://jacketmagazine.com/29/johnston-a-mauve.html>

Geoffrey Chaucer hath a blog

[http://houseoffame.blogs.friendster.com/my\\_blog/](http://houseoffame.blogs.friendster.com/my_blog/)

Sterne stuff

[http://www.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/Sterne\\_on\\_the\\_Net.html](http://www.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/Sterne_on_the_Net.html)

In memoriam Ian Hamilton Finlay

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/31/arts/design/31finlay.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/31/arts/design/31finlay.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

<http://jacketmagazine.com/15/finlay-by-stefans.html>

Literary conservatism in New Zealand?

<http://www.seductiongenie.com/blog/2006/03/19/writing-happy-thoughts/>

Naipaul gets scratchy

[http://www.literaryreview.co.uk/naipaul\\_04\\_06.html](http://www.literaryreview.co.uk/naipaul_04_06.html)

Wallywalk

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/wstevens/Wallywalk.html>

Seona Dancing

<http://www.seonadancing.com/>

Poetry podcasts (from Knopf)

<http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/poetry/index.pperl>

## **12. Great lists of our time**

A list lady/web reading collaboration on the world's smallest churches. We like the description of the wedding at Cross Island Chapel, which sits on a wooden platform in the centre of a pond, with room for bride, groom and minister only. The rest of the wedding party assembled in boats anchored around the chapel, with guests on shore imagining the vows.

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/set/church.html>